



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A.

PHONE (718) 625-3600

January 25, 1994

TO ALL CIRCUIT AND DISTRICT OVERSEERS

Dear Brothers:

By now you have received the 1994 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*. The 1993 worldwide service report makes it evident that we are living in "the final part of the days," as we see thousands of honesthearted ones streaming into Jehovah's organization to learn about his ways. (Isa. 2:1-3) What a privilege is ours to have a part in this grand educational work!

In the United States branch, many building projects are under way, some of which are nearing completion. In Brooklyn the first 11 floors of the new, 30-story 90 Sands Street residence building have been approved for occupancy. Plans are being made to build on the entire block now owned by the Society at 85 Jay Street. This property has a ground space of 135,000 square feet and is near the 117 Adams Street factory complex. The building will be used for printing presses, manufacturing, storage, and parking. The Society hopes to have all the needed permits within the next two years. Expansion is now taking place at Watchtower Farms, with additional buildings going up for residence and for food storage. Construction of the Watchtower Educational Center at Patterson, New York, is progressing nicely, and plans are being made for various departments here in Brooklyn to transfer there toward the end of 1994 and the early part of 1995.

Circuit Overseer's Weekly Schedule: The Society's letter of July 1, 1993, set out the recommended weekly schedule for circuit overseers, including evening and Saturday-afternoon witnessing for those who are not limited by advanced age or chronic health problems. Though the schedule calls for a full day on Saturday, we were pleased to see the response of so many of you to these adjustments. In September 1993, the field service average for all circuit overseers in the United States increased by five hours over the average for the same month last year. Those who have enthusiastically promoted the Saturday afternoon activity report good results, both in the number of brothers who come out and in finding more persons at home in the territory. Continue encouraging the brothers to have a full share in the ministry, particularly on the weekends, when more are free to respond.

Some have asked how shepherding work fits into the circuit overseer's schedule. It is necessary to keep things in proper perspective and balance. First and foremost, you are to "do the work of an evangelizer." (2 Tim. 4:5) Nevertheless, while a special time in the schedule is not set aside for shepherding, there

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are occasions when it can be very beneficial for a circuit overseer to call on one who is inactive, irregular, or ill, particularly if the elders request this. You could make such calls on the evening scheduled for magazine work, after you work with the group for an hour. When there is a real need, shepherding could also be done on Sunday after working an hour or two with the group or on one afternoon during the week if there are no publishers present with return visits or Bible studies scheduled. Balance will have to be exercised. Rather than spend many hours listening to those who approach you with personal problems, some matters are best handled by the local elders who know the person and his circumstances. After listening for a reasonable length of time, the circuit overseer can offer some Scriptural encouragement and refer the brother or sister to the local elders who can follow through appropriately. Furthermore, much can be accomplished in personal conversations with the brothers when at meetings and when working with them in the field. Some have found that they can provide good assistance by a telephone call in the evening.

Apartments: When new Kingdom Halls are built, many congregations are now including an apartment for the circuit overseer. The direction that appeared in the Society's letter to the traveling overseers dated April 1, 1985, page 3, presented this timely reminder: "It is good to keep in mind that you, as a traveling overseer, should not get involved in telling the brothers what they should do in connection with the construction of Kingdom Halls... It is the responsibility of the bodies of elders to decide what will be done." This principle also applies to the interior decorating and furnishing of an apartment. Traveling overseers should be content with what Jehovah has provided them.--1 Timothy 6:8.

If you do have use of an apartment, please be sure to take good care of it, keeping it clean and in good repair. Also, before moving to a new assignment, the apartment should be thoroughly cleaned. This shows loving consideration for the next circuit overseer who will be moving into the apartment.

Kingdom Ministry School Textbooks: Endeavor to keep a supply on hand so that you will be able to leave a new copy of the textbook with the presiding overseer when a brother is recommended as an elder. In some cases this may not be necessary. In the congregation's confidential files there may be a textbook in good condition that has been handed over to the Congregation Service Committee by a brother who has been deleted as an elder. If the brother who has been recommended as an elder is appointed, the presiding overseer can then give him the textbook.

If you are in need of additional Kingdom Ministry School textbooks, feel free to order these from the Society, directing your request to the attention of the Kingdom Ministry School Desk in the Service Department, and we will endeavor to fill your order as soon as possible. Provide us with the number needed (usually enough to care for the anticipated needs in the circuit for the next year or so) and an address where the books should be sent. We are not in a position to add the books to a shipment headed to an Assembly Hall.

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or a Literature Depot Center; please provide an address where books can be received safely during the day.

Child-Abuse Victims: It is important that traveling overseers and the local elders be familiar with and follow closely the guidelines in the Society's letters to all bodies of elders dated March 23, 1992, and February 3, 1993, on helping victims of child abuse. These letters also make reference to several articles that have appeared in past issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, which can be helpful to abuse victims. If certain bodies of elders need some help in this area, it may be beneficial to take some time to review the principal points of these letters and references at your meeting with the elders during your next visit to their congregation.

Reportedly, some brothers are making photocopies of material from worldly publications, as well as letters from the Society, on the subject of child abuse and are distributing these to others in the congregation. First, the Society's letters should not be copied and distributed. Also, as pointed out in the "Question Box" in *Our Kingdom Ministry* of September 1987, the congregation is not to be a channel for distribution of privately prepared material that may endorse certain types of treatment, therapy, doctors, counselors, and so forth. Traveling overseers should set the example in following the above direction.

Persons who have actually been abused in the past may have much difficulty in coping with their many thoughts and feelings. There is a need to "speak consolingly" to such ones. (1 Thess. 5:14) Since you only have a limited time during your visit, continue with kindness to direct such persons to the elders in their congregation, for this is the arrangement Jehovah sets out in the Scriptures for those who are "suffering evil." (Jas. 5:13-16) Build up the confidence of the elders. They are not mental-health professionals nor should they attempt to use psychology or other types of therapy or diagnosis. Their vital role is as spiritual shepherds, and they are equipped with the powerful Word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12) Often they can patiently assist a person with emotional problems to nurture and strengthen his spirituality by concentrating, to the extent possible, on Jehovah's principles and the marvelous promises He has in store for all those who maintain their integrity.

Kingdom Hall Construction Program: The Kingdom Hall volunteer worker arrangement was recently revised, as outlined in the October 12, 1993, letter to all bodies of elders in the United States. Many circuit overseers requested an adjustment in the program to lighten the amount of paperwork they handle. It is hoped the time gained as a result of the adjustment will help you to focus on other important aspects of your work. However, the circuit and district overseers are still a vital part of the Kingdom Hall construction arrangement. When congregations complete a Kingdom Hall Loan Survey (S-83 10/93) form, it must be approved by the circuit overseer as well as by the Regional Building Committee. Circuit overseers should review the file containing the copies of the Kingdom Hall Volunteer Worker Questionnaire (S-82 10/93) when they visit congregations. In your

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talks to the congregation, all of you can encourage volunteers and other support for the program. The publishers can be commended for the response and others can be encouraged to volunteer. Traveling overseers should approach individuals who have not yet volunteered and who have needed skills or potential. This includes skilled publishers in good standing as well as elders and ministerial servants. Share helpful observations with the regional committee for your area. (Please note paragraphs 21 and 90 of the Memorandum for Regional Building Committees.) Your assistance in supporting this program is very much appreciated.

Service Talk Suggestion: Beginning in February or no later than March 1, for your second service talk it is recommended that you use the enclosed outline entitled "Busy--In Dead Works or in Jehovah's Service?" This talk was given in connection with the "Lovers of Freedom" District Convention program. Please adapt this outline to the needs of the local congregation you are serving.

As the end of this system draws closer, our lives are becoming busier in Jehovah's service. It is fine that we always have "plenty to do in the work of the Lord," for our work is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58) We appreciate the faithful lead you and your wives, if married, are giving in the field ministry. Your example in maintaining the schedule with the congregations week by week sets the pace for Kingdom activity throughout the branch territory. You have a cherished privilege, and it is our hope that in Jehovah God's strength you will continue to experience many joys. (Neh. 8:10) May Jehovah's loving-kindness be with each one of you. We send our warm brotherly love.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. V. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.